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FM AMEMBASSY COLOMBO
TO RUEHC/SECSTATE WASHDC IMMEDIATE 7568
INFO RUEHKA/AMEMBASSY DHAKA PRIORITY 0690
RUEHIL/AMEMBASSY ISLAMABAD PRIORITY 7678
RUEHKT/AMEMBASSY KATHMANDU PRIORITY 5858
RUEHLO/AMEMBASSY LONDON PRIORITY 4222
RUEHNE/AMEMBASSY NEW DELHI PRIORITY 1774
RUEHNY/AMEMBASSY OSLO PRIORITY 4232
RUEHKO/AMEMBASSY TOKYO PRIORITY 3328
RUEHCG/AMCONSUL CHENNAI PRIORITY 8285
RUEHBI/AMCONSUL MUMBAI PRIORITY 5792
RUEHON/AMCONSUL TORONTO PRIORITY 0511
RUEHGV/USMISSION GENEVA PRIORITY 2590
RHHMUNA/HQ USPACOM HONOLULU HI PRIORITY
RHEFDIA/DIA WASHINGTON DC PRIORITY
RHEHAAA/NATIONAL SECURITY COUNCIL WASHINGTON DC PRIORITY
RUEHBS/USEU BRUSSELS PRIORITY

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DEPARTMENT FOR SCA/INS, DS/IP/SCA, AND DS/ITA

E.O. 12958: DECL: 01/04/2018

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SUBJECT: SRI LANKA: LTTE STRIKES CIVILIAN BUS IN THE
SOUTHEAST, KILLING 24

Classified By: Ambassador Robert O. Blake, Jr., for reasons 1.4(b,d).

¶1. (C) On January 16 at 7:30 am, a claymore mine exploded near Buttala, in Sri Lanka's southeastern Uva Province, hitting a civilian bus. At least 24 people were killed, including several women and children, and more than 60 were wounded. Chief of Defense Staff Donald Perera confirmed to Ambassador that five to six LTTE gunmen fired on the bus after the explosion. The gunmen also shot three farmers working in a nearby field, he said. A second explosion hit a Sri Lanka Army vehicle in nearby Galge around 9:45 am, injuring at least 3 army personnel. Perera noted that the second blast was intended to target security forces responding to the first incident.

¶2. (C) Military and police contacts tell us that the LTTE is engaging in the South to prevent increased GSL operations in the North and to destabilize the country. Our contacts also point out that attacks in the South, where many soldiers are from, will only harden the resolve of the military against the Tigers.

¶3. (U) Post issued the following statement to condemn the attack:

Colombo, January 16, 2008: The United States strongly condemns today's vicious terrorist attack on a civilian bus in Uva Province that killed at least 24 persons, including many women and children, and injured more than 60 others. We express our condolences to the victims and their families.

While no group has claimed responsibility for the attack, it bears all the hallmarks of the Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam. The targeting of civilians serves to foster fear and cause further suffering among the Sri Lankan people. Only a political solution to the country's conflict offers a way out of the current cycle of escalating violence.

¶4. (C) COMMENT: This attack was likely planned to coincide with the official end of the 2002 Ceasefire Agreement today. We anticipate an increase in attacks involving civilians as hostilities continue to escalate.

Post will continue to closely monitor the security situation.

BLAKE